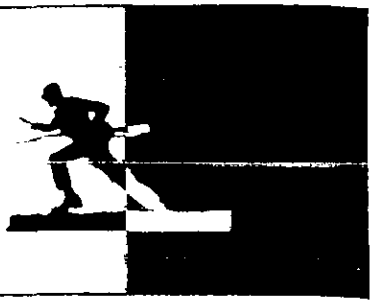
INFANTRY LETTERS



OFFICER EVALUATION

I applaud Captain Thomas M. Jordan's effort at analyzing the officer evaluation system (INFANTRY, March-April 1988, pages 16-17). I agree wholeheartedly that the system must be interactive and directed toward mentoring, not just reporting.

I do have some reservations, however, about his methodology. I would have been more comfortable with his analysis had he explained *how* he took his sample. He says that "the results [of his sample] may be an indication of a more general problem with the [OER] system." Perhaps this is true, but perhaps not. One can extend generalizations to a larger population *only* when the limited sample is selected randomly based on scientific method.

Captain Jordan may have taken a completely valid sample, but we can't be sure since he omitted the details of his sampling procedures. Until he provides this information, we must, unfortunately, remain skeptical of his resulting analysis.

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KILLING ARMOR

I would like to comment on Major Richard D. McCreight's article "Killing Armor In The Middle Ground" (INFANTRY, March-April 1988, pages 14-16).

I disagree with his assumption that most of the probable armored targets for light infantry will not be "high tech" (with reactive armor). Reactive armor is far from high tech, and it can be bolted on without great expense or design change. In fact, in roughly 18 months, the Soviets modified 75 to 80 percent of all their tanks deployed in East Germany with reactive armor.

I do agree with most of what Major McCreight has to say, but his article leaves out some points that should be addressed. The Army, for some unknown reason, has continually traded light weight for range (that is, in order to increase the range of a weapon, its weight has to increase) and has chosen systems that have a greater maximum effective range. The longer the range requirement, the more sophisticated the guidance system becomes, which in turn affects the weight of the system. The weight of the warhead is only a fraction of the total weight of the weapon. One of the results of this trade-off has been the selection of wire-guided antitank weapons.

Trading weight for range is perplexing, given some very basic considerations:

- The farther away a target is, the harder it is to detect, track, and kill even in the best of terrain.
- If the range of the weapon you are using does not exceed the range of the weapon you are trying to kill, and if your projectile (the Dragon, for example) is much slower than the enemy's projectile, you may end up on the receiving end. It doesn't matter if the target is a tank, a BMP, or a rifle.
- Most tank engagements will not occur at the maximum effective range of the main gun, nor will most engagements with medium or long range antiarmor systems take place at their maximum effective range, regardless of terrain.

I recently read an article that outlined some basic requirements for a "new" antiarmor system being jointly developed by DARPA and the Navy. The requirements were virtually identical to those initially proposed for the Dragon back in the early 1960s: The weapon must be lightweight, manportable, with no requirement for the gunner to guide the missile to the target. It seems that the basic requirements for a light infantry antiarmor weapon don't change. A soldier has to be able to carry the weapon and its ammunition and to move out of the firing area once the projectile leaves the tube. With some basic common sense, his chances of survival are increased.

I disagree with Major McCreight's statement that most of the units that retain the M67 90mm recoilless rifle do so "by default, not by choice." After a six-month look into issues concerning the medium antiarmor weapon, I found that the units that are equipped with both the 90mm and the Dragon (the 75th Ranger Regiment, for example) train on their weapon of choice (the 90mm) while placing less emphasis on the other (the Dragon). The choice of weapons in this case is determined by a METT-T analysis. If the opposing force has little or no armor, it would be a mistake to carry the Dragon, because a Dragon round weighs much more than a round of 90mm ammunition. Resupply of ammunition is also made much easier. In addition, the 90mm gunner does not have to have "nerves of steel." He does not have to track the target until impact but can move once he has fired the round.

Developing a weapon is only half of the problem. Developing a good realistic training program, training devices, and support packages to go with the system is the second part of the task. Current Dragon and TOW sustainment training would be ideal if opposing force vehicles moved from flank to flank with no variation in speed or direction, if they were not

equipped with ammunition to shoot back, and if each vehicle had a giant red cross painted on its side.

Live fire training is equally unrealistic, more bent on achieving a high percentage of hits. After all, no commander wants to tell his boss that the seven missiles he fired this year, costing $300,000 each, were all misses, even if his gunners received the best possible training.

We in the Army need to develop a usable weapon for light infantry on the basis of a thorough threat analysis and a consideration of what the man on the ground needs and expects.

Ultimately, trying to train away a weapon system's shortfalls is dangerous to the Army and to its soldiers. Some people delude themselves into thinking that the major problem is in the training process or in the quality of the people manning the system, and not in the weapon itself. It has taken 20 years for people to realize that the basic problem with the Dragon is the Dragon.

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FINGER DRILLS

Finger drills are a sorely misunderstood training tool. They can serve a vital role in unit training but can also become an excuse for poor training. Leaders often ignore the necessary but mundane factors in a combat operation, such as security or long foot movements. At these times, they label their failures as "finger drills" and continue to make those same mistakes.

Finger drills are combat drills, situational training exercises, or missions executed in a non-tactical environment, such as an open field. All elements of the unit are visible to everyone else. As the drill is conducted, the leader may recite aloud what is happening so that everybody understands. The emphasis is placed on the sequence of events and the coordination of actions between elements. An abbreviated schedule is often used to save time.

Finger drills provide the trainer an opportunity to explain an operation, such as the conduct of an ambush, so that everybody present can see, hear, and understand the lesson. In the Army's "Talk, Crawl, Walk, Run" method of instruction, finger drills are used primarily in the Crawl and Walk portions. Once each soldier understands his individual role in relation to the rest of the unit, they all move into the field and do a task tactically.

A primary characteristic of all finger drills is that they save the soldiers effort in executing a particular drill or operation because physical discomforts are avoided so the soldiers can learn.

But this labor-saving factor is where finger drills can hurt training. Once the unit can conduct an operation properly, it should execute that mission in a realistic, tactical environment. This includes the uncomfortable but necessary things such as security and individual movement techniques, all of which come under the heading of field discipline.

When a unit fails to maintain that field discipline, it resorts to short cuts. Thus, notional security is used, necessary foot movement is ignored, and tactical integrity is lost. Training realism is sacrificed for comfort. Then the soldiers come to expect those comforts, and combat readiness is lost. These shortcomings are dismissed as finger drills, as if they serve a useful role in training. Finger drills then become the excuse for poor training, and this happens so often that we don't even realize we're doing it.

There are a few clues that will let a leader know he is commiting one of these finger drills of convenience: In a tactical environment, he often finds himself referring to "notional factors." (The positioning of security, especially, should never be notional.) He often hears himself using the phrase, "Well, in combat we would be doing such-and-such, but this isn't combat."

Leaders must look at themselves and honestly determine whether they are using a finger drill as a training tool or merely trying to avoid an unpleasant task. Certainly, a mission will often be difficult when a large percentage of a unit is not in the field training, but that is also what we can expect in combat. If we don't improvise but continue to use finger drills in training missions, we'll end up using them in combat with tragic results.

Used properly, finger drills improve our combat readiness through effective training. Used improperly, they mask problems in field discipline and promote bad habits. The onus for recognizing the difference and doing what is best for training is on the leaders.

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BATTLEFIELD PSYCHOLOGY

Your PAST TIMES reprint of Captain Adolf von Schell's article is outstanding (see "Battlefield Psychology," March-April 1988, pages 40-44).

He had it right that men are the key element on the battlefield and that a leader must know his men (their variable strengths, weaknesses, and idiosyncrasies with emphasis on their mental or psychological characteristics) and know how to "play" their reactions to the unknown and changing conditions of battle to get them to perform and accomplish their mission.

He is also correct in pointing out that this knowledge or skill that a leader must know and know how to exercise cannot be learned or practiced in peacetime. But I think we've progressed some since von Schell's time (World War I and after). The high-tempo, stressful training at the National Training Center can, to some degree, provide the environment that will give a leader some insight into the character (in von Schell's sense) of his men and some practice in how to lead them inspirationally to mission accomplishment.

But the NTC experience is a sometime thing. How do our leaders in garrison come to know and appreciate

their men? Do the various distractions of garrison duty, or even ordinary field training, allow the closeness and intensity of relationships that are necessary for a leader to truly know his men?

If Captain von Schell's theses are correct, and they seem to jibe with my troop leading experiences, he helps explain some of our dismal performances in Vietnam -six-month command tours may allow a commander to become effective only when his "time is up." We thus fielded an Army that was continually learning the basics instead of an effective battle-hardened force.

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DIVISION AND BRIGADE LINEAGES

The effort in recent years to instill esprit de corps in the combat arms is a valuable one, but it has concentrated on the histories and traditions of the regiments. Yet most veterans, when asked, point to their wartime service in a division or an independent brigade as the focus of their pride. The most visible part of a soldier's uniform is the shoulder patch, not the unit crest.

Regimental history and tradition is a positive influence on the pride and performance of a soldier, but division and brigade identification should be encouraged as well. Accordingly, the activation and retention of divisions and brigades that have no combat experience should cease, and no veteran division should be relegated to the status of an administrative command. The lineages of the combat divisions and brigades should be preserved in the organization of the Army.

From its entry into World War I in 1917 to its withdrawal from the Vietnam War in 1975, the Army has fielded 90 divisions and 7 independent brigades in battle. (This number includes the Philippine Division, since removed from the Army's rolls at the request of the Philippine Government.) Without a general mobilization, most of these veteran outfits will remain inactive.

In order to preserve the lineages of some of the divisions, the Army has already converted some divisions to brigades. In fact, this seems to be the trend in the National Guard. Wider use of this same conversion by the Regular Army and the Army Reserve would preserve the heritage of other veteran divisions.

It is possible to reorganize the 89 divisions and 7 brigades into 40 divisions and 56 brigades that the Army could reactivate and deactivate in accordance with its most current needs.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Shimer's two tables showing the veteran divisions and brigades and his proposed divisions and brigades are too long for inclusion here. INFANTRY will send copies of them, however, to anyone who writes and requests them. Our address is P.O. Box 2005, Fort Benning, GA 31905-0605.

NEW SERGEANTS

Having spent six years as an infantry noncommissioned officer, I thought Command Sergeant Major Roy C. Owens' comments on the nature of a sergeant's life overemphasized the negative aspects ("Thoughts for a New Sergeant," INFANTRY, May-June 1988, pages 18-19). He seemed to forget a sergeant's third and most satisfying source of authority--his troops' respect. Only a sergeant who has earned his authority from his troops' perspective can gain prompt, willing obedience of his orders.

If a sergeant can't gain the respect of his troops, no amount of military or delegated authority will ever enable him to lead them. At best, in peacetime they will grudgingly obey his orders under threat of disciplinary action. If they risk their lives in combat, it will be for someone else--someone who has earned his stripes.

Ironically, the Army is one of the more truly democratic institutions in the United States. Any time a leader gives an unpleasant order, he is asking for a vote of confidence. If his men trust and respect him, they will "re-elect" him with their actions.

I am not talking about a leader's popularity. Being popular and being respected are two completely different things. Soldiers recognize fairness and competence in even the sternest of sergeants, just as they also see through a "two-faced" sergeant. Any private can tell you which one he will obey the fastest, and which one he will ask for help with his problems.

I have been taught that leadership is "the art of influencing men to willingly accomplish the mission." We need to underline the word "willingly." A good sergeant won't coerce or cajole his men into doing their duties. They will perform because he has told them they should, and they believe him.

That's why we need good sergeants.

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MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

The U.S. Air Force Academy's Thirteenth Military History Symposium, "The Intelligence Revolution: A Historical Perspective," will be held 12-14 October 1988.

For further information concerning the program and registration, anyone who is interested may write to HQ USAF/DFH, ATTN: Captain Clodfelter, USAFD Academy, Colorado Springs, CO 80840-5701; telephone AUTOVON 259-3230 or commercial (719) 472-3230.

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